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INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

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AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 14658

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PDIP IN

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEWAL SINGH AND US-INDIAN RELATIONS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: MRS. GANDHI'S APPOINTMENT OF KEWAL SINGH AS AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON CONSTITUTES A FURTHER CONFIRMATION THAT THE GOI WISHES TO CALM ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US. AMBASSADOR KEWAL SINGH AND OTHER SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE GOI HAVE BEEN PURSUING THIS OBJECTIVE FOR PERHAPS AS LONG AS A YEAR. DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS THERE HAS BEEN AN ACCUMULATION OF EVIDENCE THAT SMOOTHER US-INDIAN RELATIONS HAVE BECOME AN ACKNOWLEDGED OBJECTIVE OF THE GOI. END SUMMARY.

2. THIS NEW, AND PROBABLY STILL TENTATIVE, APPROACH TO THE US IS A PART OF A NEW GLOBAL APPROACH BY THE GOI TO OPEN NEW OPTIONS IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY AND PERHAPS OBTAIN A BETTER BALANCE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, CHINA AND THE US. AS THE
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FOREIGN SECRETARY PUT IT THE OTHER DAY, INDIA SEEKS

TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH TWO MAJOR POWERS WHILE RETAINING ITS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE THIRD. THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE SHIFTS IN INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY SHOULD NOT BE EXAGGERATED, HOWEVER. SO FAR, INDIA IS OPENING OPTIONS, NOT SELECTING THEM. WHILE IT HAS EXCHANGED AMBASSADORS WITH CHINA IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF GOOD WILL, IT IS PROCEEDING VERY SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY IN REGARD TO NEXT STEPS. WHILE INDIAN OFFICIALS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE SOVIET UNION'S INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO MEET THEIR ECONOMIC NEEDS AND OF THEIR ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON THE WESTERN MARKET ECONOMIES, THE GOI CONTINUES TO MAKE A VERY EFFORT TO MAINTAIN ITS CLOSE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR. FINALLY, MRS. GANDHI CONTINUES TO HARBOR SERIOUS SUSPICIONS REGARDING US INTENTIONS BOTH INSIDE INDIAN AND IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. SHE HAS STATED PUBLICLY THAT SHE SEEKS GOOD RELATIONS WITH "FOREIGN COUNTRIES" DESPITE THEIR SUPPORT TO OPPOSITION ELEMENTS IN INDIA..

3. BEHIND INDIA'S GLOBAL INITIATIVES, THE GOI HAS TAKEN A SERIES OF STEPS TO CREATE A STABLE SITUATION IN SOUTH ASIA ACCEPTABLE TO INDIA. THE SIMLA NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT THE MOST SETTLED RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN WHICH HAS EXISTED IN YEARS. DIFFERENCES WITH SRI LANKA AND NEPAL HAVE LARGELY BEEN RESOLVED. THE PAST THREE YEARS HAS SEEN A STRIKING TURN ABOUT IN INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH IRAN WHICH ARE NOW GOOD AND ARE BASED UPON COMMON ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INTERESTS. BANGLADESH IS, OF COURSE, THE EXCEPTION.

4. THE GOI HAS TAKEN A NUMBER OF RECENT STEPS TO IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERE OF US-INDIAN RELATIONS. IT HAS ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS TO OFFICIALS THAT THEY SHOULD AVOID UNNECESSARY CRITICISM OF THE US. IT HAS BEGUN TO ENFORCE PRESS GUIDELINES IN SUCH A WAY AS TO KEEP MOST CRITICISM OF THE US OUT OF THE INDIAN PRESS. WHILE MRS. GANDHI OCCASIONALLY ALLEGES FOREIGN INTERFERENCES IN INDIA, HER FREQUENT AND DIRECT ATTACKS ON THE US HAVE STOPPED. WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN GETTING ACROSS TO THE GOI BY WORD AND ACT THAT IT CANNOT CRITICIZE US AND EXPECT TO GET THE BENEFITS FROM US IT SEEKS. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, OCCASIONAL EXCEPT-

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TIONS TO CURRENT INDIAN PRACTICE AND MRS. GANDHI, IF PROVOKED, MIGHT RESUME HER ATTACKS ON US WITHOUT NOTICE, BUT THE ABSENCE OF CRITICISM DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DELIBERATE CHANGE.

5. THE GOI HAS ALSO SHOWN SOME GREATER REGARD FOR US INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS. ITS RESERVATIONS ON PUERTO RICO AND KOREA AT COLOMBO CAME IN RESPONSE TO DIRECT US REQUESTS AND FOUND INDIA

IN THE COMPANY OF THE NON-ALIGNED CONSERVATIVES, PROBABLY FOR THE FIRST TIME. DESPITE ITS CHAMPIONING OF THE INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE PROPOSAL, THE INDIANS WERE AMONG THE MODERATES WHO PRODUCED A GENERAL RESOLUTION AVOIDING MENTION OF DIEGO GARCIA FOR THE CURRENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY. WE HEAR FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT IT PLANS TO GIVE GREATER ATTENTION TO THE IMPACT OF ITS POSITIONS IN NEW YORK ON ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS; AND INDEED AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEWAL SINGH IS SEEKING A GREATER ROLE FOR HIS EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON IN REGARD TO UN ISSUES PRECISELY BECAUSE OF HIS RECOGNITION OF THAT IMPACT.

6. THERE IS ALSO THE RECOGNITION IN NEW DELHI -- AS THERE IS IN WASHINGTON -- THAT INDIA'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE WILL BE SERVED BY SUCCESS RATHER THAN FAILURE AND CO-OPERATION RATHER THAN CONFRONTATION. THE INDIANS HAVE NO INTEREST IN RADICAL PROPOSALS ON COMMODITIES AND THEIR INTEREST IN DEBT RELIEF IS PART OF A BROADER INTEREST IN RESOURCE TRANSFER GENERALLY AND THEREFORE CAN BE SERVED BY MORE GENERAL SOLUTIONS. ABOVE ALL, HOWEVER, THE INDIANS LOOK TO THE UNITED STATES FOR IDA REPLENISHMENT AND OTHER MEASURES FOR THE TRANSFER OF RESOURCES WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO INDIAN DEVELOPMENT AND SEEK TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO ENCOURAGE FAVORABLE ACTION.

7. IT IS APPARENT THAT THE GOI HAS GIVEN KEWAL SINGH AN INITIAL TASK OF SEEKING TO KEEP US-INDIA RELATIONS CALM DURING THE ELECTON PERIOD. IT IS ALSO APPARENT THAT THE GOI RECOGNIZES, AS DO WE, THAT THE OBSTACLES, ON BOTH SIDES, TO GOOD RELATIONS ARE SUCH THAT PROGRESS WILL BE SLOW AND LIMITED AND THAT THE PACE SHOULD NOT BE FORCED. WE HAVE WARNED WWAL SINGH THAT BOTH THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND NON-PROLIFERATION ISSUES CAN BE EXPECTED TO REMAIN IMPORTANT FACTORS BEARING ON JUDGMENTS BY THE US CONGRESS, THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC CONCERNING US POLICIES TOWARD INDIA. WE HAVE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT MRS. GANDHI'S UNJUSTIFIED SUSPICION
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CIONS AND THESE TWO ISSUES PROBABLY LIMITE HOW FAR US-INDIAN RELATIONS MAY BE IMPROVED. WHEN AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEWAL SINGH MAKES HIS FIRST CALLS IN WASHINGTON, WE URGE THAT HIS PERSONAL EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE CLIMATE OF OUR RELATIONS BE WARMLY REPROCATED. AT THE SAME TIME, WE BELIEVE WASHINGTON SHOULD BE UTTERLY CANDID WITH HIM ABOUT THE PROBLEMS AHEAD. TOO OFTEN THE STABILITY OF OUR RELATIONS HAS BEEN UPSET BY FALSELY OPTIMISTIC EXPECTATIONS.

8. WE URGE WASHINGTON TO MONITOR INDIA'S ACTIONS WHILE IT OPENS NEW OPTIONS IN ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND THE US. OUR RELATIONS WITH INDIA WERE CHILLED OVER A PERIOD OF SEVERAL YEARS IN WHICH INDIA CONSISTENTLY SEEMED NOT ONLY INDIFFERENT TO US INTERESTS ON A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES, BUT OCCASIONALLY TO REJOICE IN US DIFFICULTIES. WE HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF SIGNS THAT THAT ATTITUDE

IS CHANGING, THAT THE INDIANS ARE MORE AWARE OF OUR INTERESTS AND OF OUR PROBLEMS ELSEWHERE, AND THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO TAKE STEPS TO ACCOMMODATE THESE EVEN WHEN THIS IS DISAGREEABLE TO OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES. THIS PROCESS WAS INITIATED BY THE INDIANS WITHOUT PROMPTING FROM ANYONE (ALTHOUGH OUR STANCE OF LEAVING IT TO THE INDIANS TO DECIDE WHAT RELATIONS THEY WANTED WITH US MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED) AND WILL CONTINUE WITHOUT ANY ACTION ON OUR PART; IT MAY BRING RESULTS OF GEO-POLITICAL BENEFIT TO THE US. IT WILL CONTINUE, HOWEVER, ONLY SO LONG AS THE GOI CONSIDERS THAT THERE ARE BENEFITS TO BE OBTAINED, AND THE US APPEARS EQUALLY SYMPATHETIC TO INDIAN CONCERNS. OUR POSITION THUS FAR ON FARAKKA WOULD SEEM TO FIT THIS DESCRIPTION. WE THEREFORE URGE WASHINGTON TO AVOID ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT CAUSE THE GOI TO CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS LITTLE TO BE GAINED BY ITS EFFORTS. IN THIS REGARD WE HARDLY NEED MENTION THAT THE BELLWETHER MAY AGAIN BE OUR ACTIONS WITH REGARD TO PAKISTAN.

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